Institute for Culture and Society
Occasional Paper Series

The Temporalities of International Migration: Implications for Ethnographic Research

Dr Shanthi Robertson

University of Western Sydney

February 2014

Editors: Professor David Rowe and Dr Reena Dobson
Assistant Editor: Dr Michelle Kelly

University of Western Sydney
Bringing knowledge to life

INSTITUTE FOR CULTURE AND SOCIETY

The Temporalities of International Migration:
Implications for Ethnographic Research

Shanthi Robertson

Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney

Abstract

Contemporary processes of international migration are often heterogeneous, circular and varied in terms of stages and durations, with the boundaries between permanent and temporary mobility becoming increasingly porous and contingent. These processes are driven by systems of governance that privilege 'just-in-time' immigration and gradations of partial and temporary membership over full citizenship. In light of this tension, there is emerging theoretical and empirical interest in the temporalities of international migration. Yet, methodologies that continue to work under assumptions of migration as temporally linear and spatially unidirectional movements from home to host country fail to capture much of the complexity of these processes. This paper addresses some of the implications of this complexity, focussing in particular on the temporalities of migration in the context of ethnographic research methods. It argues that traditional ethnographic approaches, such as interviews and participant observation, are limited in their ability to capture the dynamic temporalities of international migration. Using a conceptual framework of 'time tracks' (temporal paths of social behaviour) and 'timescales' (scales of social and political temporal ordering), the paper then discusses some of the core methodological issues around the temporal dimensions of contemporary migration. It also suggests some alternative ethnographic research practices which could engage more fully with these temporal dimensions.

Keywords: Migration, ethnography, methodology, time, temporality

Introduction

Transformations in both time and space are central to theoretical understandings of modernity and globalization (see, for example, Harvey, 1999; Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Urry, 2000). This paper is specifically concerned with understandings of time in terms of the empirical study of contemporary international migration processes, and in particular in terms of ethnographic methodological approaches. I argue that, in the context of a complex and globalized modernity, temporalities of migration are increasingly recognized as heterogeneous and dynamic. While circular, temporary and staggered mobilities have always been a part of global migration circuits, modern transportation and communications technologies have further facilitated increasing temporal heterogeneity, and new modes of temporariness are becoming institutionalized in new ways (Rajkumar, Berkowitz, Vosko, Preston and Latham, 2012). In particular, although Western Europe has an extensive history

with guest worker-type temporary migration (see, for example, Castles, Booth and Wallace, 1984), traditionally 'settler' receiving societies such as Australia, Canada and New Zealand have only recently begun to shift from the policies of permanent settlement that dominated post-war mass immigration schemes to more temporary or 'staggered' migration programs.

Traditional understandings of international migration, particularly in settler societies, were often predicated on a linear temporal journey from alien to citizen, and from arrival to assimilation (Meeus, 2012). International migration is now acknowledged to have significantly varied tempos and rhythms, and is often distinctly non-linear and open-ended, involving diversion, repetition and simultaneity (Allon, Anderson and Bushell, 2008; Collins, 2012; Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson, 2013; Lewis and Neal, 2005). Alongside it there exists a blurring of the boundaries between categories of migrant such as temporary/permanent, legal/illegal, skilled/unskilled and sojourner/settler. This change has led to "mottled profiles" (Yeoh and Lin, 2013: 39) or "mutant mobilities" (Allon, Anderson and Bushell, 2008: 74) – that is, migration intentions and migrant identities that are heterogeneous and temporally fluid. These contemporary temporalities of international migration are largely driven by neoliberal forces. On the one hand, in receiving countries immigration has in many contexts become a 'just-in-time' process that seeks to import flexible, transient and expendable labour (Aneesh, 2001; Neilson, 2009). On the other hand, sending countries seek to circularize not only flows of people, but also of money, ideas and political energy (Gamlen, 2008).

In this paper I argue that traditional ethnographic methods of interviewing and participant observation, which often occur at fixed sites, at fixed moments and over fixed durations, often fail to engage with the complex questions emerging around international migration and time. Although ideas of methodology as 'multi-sited' or 'de-nationalized' have been explored in the international migration field (Amelina and Faist, 2012; Fitzgerald, 2006; Marcus, 1995), the paper asks in addition how we 'do' ethnographic migration research that captures multiplicity in the temporal dimension, as well as in the spatial. I first establish some of the key ideas in contemporary theoretical and empirical discussions of migration and time. I also engage with some current debates around methodology in the field, and position the discussion of the temporalities of international migration within these debates. Next, I develop a conceptual framework of 'time track' (a temporal path of social behaviour) and 'timescale' (various scales of social and political temporal ordering), before identifying two keys areas of methodological concern around migration and temporality within this framework: time as a 'boundary category' in identifying and categorizing research subjects; and time as a form of discipline and control in the governance and regulation of migration. I then turn to a discussion of research practices within ethnography that may begin to address some of these issues, including how traditional ethnographic techniques can be reframed in a temporal approach, and how self-documentation and virtual or digital methods may also be employed. The paper concludes with some overall remarks about the methodological challenges of 'breaking in' to the temporal dimension in ethnographies of international migration.

Time has a quality in analysis that is both knotty and slippery: it is, by its very nature, 'everywhere' and 'everything', yet it is notoriously hard to 'pin down' analytically, precisely because of this pervasiveness (Carlstein, Parkes and Thrift, 1978; Cwerner, 2001; Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson, 2013; Munn, 1992). This is particularly the case in discussing the pragmatics of 'doing' research. I present here a grounded approach to time as it relates to ethnographic method in a globalized and mobilized world. I look at a selection of key aspects of time (which I term 'time track' and 'timescale') that seem to have specific salience to

current and emerging processes and experiences of international migration, rather than providing an inclusive picture of all theoretical aspects of migration and time (for a more comprehensive review, see Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson, 2013). I seek to use these specific framing concepts, and to draw on my own and others' existing research on contemporary migration processes, to think about how time could be made more central to ethnographic research practice.

Unpacking time, migration and methodology in the contemporary context

Scholarly understandings of migration are changing, and temporality is key to these changes. Rather than models of one-way mobility, settlement and integration, the study of international migration increasingly acknowledges the transnationality and temporariness of diverse kinds of migrant subjects, from the elite knowledge workers who circulate through global cities, to the low-skilled contract labourers who flow back and forth from the Global South to the Global North. These heterogeneous and multidirectional flows of migrants are embedded within new modes for states' management of migration as well as of new forms of migrant agency and migrant subjectivities (Castles, 2002; Goldring and Landolt, 2011; Ong, 2006).

Although the broader social analysis of time has a history dating back to theorists like Durkheim ([1912] 1915, [1895] 1964) and Mead (1932), there is only a fairly limited range of recent work that offers a thorough conceptual analysis of contemporary migration and time. In general, the spatial has been utilized in far greater depth than the temporal as a framing concept for understanding processes of globalization, including migration (May and Thrift, 2001). There is, however, an emerging literature that acknowledges that migration is as much concerned with time as with space, and that all migration processes clearly have complex temporal dimensions. Mostly notably, Cwerner (2001) develops a detailed sociological framework of the 'times of migration' and Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson (2013) offer a comprehensive theoretical review of migration, time and temporalities. Empirically, there is a range of work, including the time politics of asylum regimes (Cwerner, 2004); how travelling subjects take and make time (Elsrud, 1998); links between temporal order and the re-socialization of migrants in host societies (Golden, 2002); and the temporalities of displacement (Worby, 2010). Previous work on lifecourse theory in migration studies (see, for example, Bailey, 2009; Kobayashi and Preston, 2007) with its emphasis on temporal contingencies, stages, transitions, and sequencing, also heavily informs this discussion of migration and time.

There are also various existing arguments for the value of ethnography and of mixed or multiple methods in capturing the new spatio-temporal formations of contemporary international migration (see, for example, Findlay and Li, 1999; Fitzgerald, 2006; McHugh, 2000). Much of this work, especially debates around multi-sited ethnography and mobile methods (Fitzgerald, 2006; Marcus, 1995; Smith, 2001), comes in the wake of critiques of 'methodological nationalism' (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002, 2003), and in the context of the 'transnational turn' and the 'mobilities turn' that have radically altered methodological and ontological approaches in terms of a reconfiguration of space. Researchers have sought to be more mobile through their research practices and engage with virtual spaces in their attempts to capture migrants' lives through and across time and space. A strong argument has been made that ethnographic approaches can in particular be highly valuable to describe and explain "the play of migration and mobility in spatiotemporal reorderings and transformations" (McHugh, 2000: 83), as well as

to develop "the articulation of macro structures with members' lived experience, micro-interactions, and a deep appreciation of members' meanings" (Fitzgerald, 2006: 11).

However, much of this methodological discussion still focuses primarily on the spatial and the scalar transformations of method, rather than the temporal. By and large, as Meeus (2012) has argued, critiques of methodological nationalism imply but do not explicitly theorize temporality. There are thus few direct connections between the international migration literature on methodological innovation and the literature on migration and time, with the exception of King, Thomson, Fielding and Warnes (2006: 259), who argue for a "deeper ethnography of migrant decision making" to illuminate the complexity of both long- and short-term outcomes. The implications of new conceptualizations and approaches to time and migration to methodology, particularly ethnography, thus remain largely unexplored. As Findlay and Li (1999: 52) state, "contemporary social theory seems to require greater methodological diversity in order to uncover the multiple meanings of 'events' such as migration." However, the problem remains, methodologically, of seeing migration as an 'event': as a single act of mobility *in* time, rather than a complex and possibly fragmented process *across* time.

This paper is thus an attempt to unpack some key issues around time and ethnographic methods in the study of international migration. It comes from a position of seeking to break down embedded assumptions about the temporal linearity of migration, just as previous critique has sought to break from the spatial boundaries of the nation-state. It is based on the idea that migration trajectories are temporal as well as spatial, and that arrivals, departures, journeys and transits can be understood as temporal events and processes as well as spatial crossings, and that there are intersections and also disconnections between different aspects of time in migration trajectories. I add primarily to the agenda-setting work of Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson (2013), Cwerner (2001) and King et al. (2006) on migration and temporality by looking specifically at some ways that the temporal can be brought in to ethnographic research practices.

Conceptualizing heterogeneous migrant temporalities: Time tracks and timescales

A variety of terms has been used to describe the different facets of time in relation to migration, including temporal horizons, temporal dimensions, timescale, timescape, and so on. Here I draw on and refine some of these concepts to develop some useful conceptual possibilities for 'grounding' an ethnographic understanding of complex and 'unfixed' migration processes. First, I borrow from Lyman and Scott (1989) the general concept of the 'time track' to describe the journeys of migrants across time and space. The time track implies movement over time but not always forward movement. A migration time track is embedded within biographical time, but its beginning and ending cannot simply be defined through mobility 'events'. Rather, migration is a 'flow', involving a series of decisions, actions and occurrences that lead to mobility and a cascading sequence of consequences that occur afterwards. Time tracks include physical border crossings, but also crossings and transitions that are non-corporeal 'status passages' (Glaser and Strauss, [1971] 2010). Borders occurring with the time track can demarcate 'then' and 'now' as much as 'here' and 'there', and can take the shape of actual physical borders, "paper borders" (Rajkumar et al., 2012: 483) or imagined borders of identity and belonging. A migration time track can be circular; can stop and restart at different life stages; and can encompass dynamic senses of beginnings and endings, disruptions, withdrawals, accelerations and decelerations. The term

itself seeks to resonate less with linearity and forward trajectory than with the possibility of winding, staggered or circuitous journeys. The second key concept that I employ here is that of the 'timescale' to describe different levels of temporal orderings and events. Here I rely mostly on Meeus' (2012) conceptualization of the timescale operating in migration processes at three levels: a macro timescale of global political economy, particularly around spatially unequal processes of capital accumulation (including financial but also cultural and social capital); a meso timescale of migration regimes (including national and supranational systems of governance, but also brokers, agents, recruiters and other facilitators of mobility); and the individual level timescale of biography. This micro timescale is akin to the concept of the lifecourse, as "the series of stages and transitions in life which are culturally and institutionally framed from birth to death" (Heinz and Krüger, 2001: 33).

The time track is structured by and embedded within all three of these timescales in different ways. Take, for example, the migrants described in Barber's (2000) and Parreñas' (2010) ethnographies of women's labour migration from the Philippines. Their migration is deeply embedded in the timescale of the Philippines as nation-state, both in the context of postcolonial economic and political restructuring and the temporal narratives of the state that position migrants as central to national imaginaries of the future (Rodriguez, 2002). Secondly, at the meso-level, the time tracks of these migrants are heavily structured by the timescales of different governance systems in host states. In Asian and Middle Eastern destinations, the pattern is that of sequential short-term contracts, whereas in Canada longer-term trajectories are more possible, if migrants are able to meet particular criteria over time. The time tracks of these migrants consist of events that influence decisions and unevenly spaced moments of departure, arrival, transit and return. Although futures are often imagined as linear pathways to economic and social stability through migration, ultimately these futures are constantly 'reworked' through changing social and economic conditions, and the influences of other actors. Parreñas (2010) also notes how a migration time track can interrupt or suspend the individual biographical timescale, structuring periods of migration as 'outside' of migrants' 'actual' lives at home, as well as how patterns of life and work in the host country can enable forms of segregation that are temporal as well as spatial. These examples illustrate how concepts of time track and timescale can be used to illuminate the temporal in ethnographic studies of migration.

Time and the construction of research subjects

It is increasingly difficult to distinguish when migration begins; its temporal edges are not always easy to define (King et al., 2006). The temporal categories of temporary and permanent, as well as the category of 'migrant' itself, are destabilized, particularly when the complexities of actual and expected durations, temporal limitations of legal statuses, and varied cultural and social understandings of time and mobility are taken into consideration. Working from a time track framework of international migration, which engages with this temporal complexity, problematizes the standard means through which the 'subjects' of migration ethnographies are defined and categorized.I use here some examples in the Australian context that illustrate this point. Historically a 'settler-nation', Australia now allows the entrance of thousands of overseas temporary workers on student, graduate and working holiday visas. Many reside and work in Australia for extended periods of several years, and their journeys can variously end in permanent settlement, return, circularity or on-migration to a third country. However, immigration systems and social policy frameworks overwhelmingly position these groups as transient consumers of education or as tourists

rather than migrants (Dauvergne and Marsden, 2011; Robertson, 2011, 2013). As a result, the staggered trajectories of young people entering Australia on temporary visas remain unrecognized in Australian migration ethnographies, which tend to focus instead on traditional 'settler-migrant' pathways, both humanitarian and skilled.

These examples illustrate that the official status and the cultural status of some mobile groups can cast them outside the identity of 'migrant'. However, this does not, and in fact should not, preclude them from being included in ethnographies of migration, particularly when a 'sojourner' or 'visitor' status may be part of a longer-term migration time track and involve sustained patterns of work and residence, or when transient subjects form communities that are 'permanently transient' and thus have an ongoing collective impact on the host society. Quantitatively determined 'cut-offs' that decide who 'counts' as a migrant, or relying on official statistics that may define mobile actors in limited ways, do not reflect the complexity of time tracks as lived experiences that disturb settler/sojourner and temporary/permanent binaries within institutional timescales. The time track and timescale framework goes some way to recognizing the problems, as identified by Griffiths, Rogers and Anderson (2013) and Favell (2005), of relying on official data and statistics as framing points for research, particularly of an ethnographic kind. A temporal framework of time track that sees migration as multidirectional rather than unidirectional, and as an uneven and temporally contingent process, subject to accelerations, suspensions and disruptions, also has the capacity to bring various other immobile actors into the field of ethnographic migration research. Seeing migration time tracks as always potentially incomplete temporal processes means that 'failed' migrants, returned migrants, 'almost' migrants, potential migrants, and immobile home communities and families can all come into the research field in a meaningful way. This inclusion goes some way to answering calls to incorporate other actors besides the classically defined 'migrant-as-mobile-body' into migration research (Carling, 2002; Fischer, Martin and Straubhaar, 1997).

Temporality may also be embedded within time tracks and timescales as a form of identity. McHugh (2000) notes how individuals who ostensibly have similar trajectories of physical mobility can have differing 'place attachments' and temporal identities, such as being rooted, suspended, or footloose. My own research into student-migrants in Australia has similarly found various and dynamic subjective senses of precarity, rootedness, pendularity, suspension and nomadism across student-migrant time tracks (Robertson, 2013; Robertson and Runganaikaloo, forthcoming) that are related, sometimes in complementary or contradictory ways, with official statuses of belonging and with actual lived durations in particular places. The constraints of institutional timescales are sometimes reworked or resisted by migrants as they tried to reconcile these with their own imaginaries for their journeys. I suggest, therefore, that ethnographers also need to look at the ways in which time tracks and timescales operate in migrant subjectivities, particularly how temporal identities transform across the time track, and how relationships to different places function at different times.

Bringing in macro and meso timescales

The individual biographical timescale, rather than the meso or the macro, is often the implicit focus of ethnographic research in terms of lifecourse or biography (King et al., 2006). While the various constraints of 'structure' or 'governmentality' on mobile bodies have been well explored in previous research, here I seek to explore specifically the temporal dimensions of particular structural forms in relation to ethnographic analysis. There are many examples of what Cwerner (2001) refers to as "heteronomous time": temporal orderings at the level of the meso or institutional timescale that function explicitly as a disciplinary practice. States alter both time and space to create "interstitial zones" in the processing of asylum seekers (Mountz, 2010), with temporary, liminal statuses intimately affecting everyday lives (Mountz, Wright, Biyares and Bailey, 2002). Recent policies in Australia have tried explicitly to ensure that onshore claims of asylum are processed as slowly as offshore claims: a temporal tactic purporting to discourage arrivals of asylum seekers by boat. Skilled migrants are also affected, with states increasingly using periods of temporariness as a "testing…ground" (Rajkumar et al., 2012: 486) during which migrants must perform or accumulate desirable attributes that can grant them extended, repeat or permanent stays (Dauvergne and Marsden, 2011; Goldring and Landolt, 2011; Robertson and Runganaikaloo, forthcoming). The micro temporalities of family and social life are intimately affected by macro and meso timescales. For example, romantic relationships are accelerated to obtain spouse or partner visas; having children is delayed until permanent status is achieved; or planning return is dependent on macro political or economic circumstances in the home country. In this way timescales and time tracks intersect, often around unpredictability, precarity and uncertain futures.

Within heteronomous time, time often functions as a border, and this border is made tangible in various ways: through temporal eligibility criteria (such as being a certain age or having a certain duration of study or work experience to qualify for migration); through temporal limitations to duration of stay; through 'processing times' for visas and any changes to rights or status; through durations of work or residence required to acquire new memberships like permanent residency or citizenship; and through temporal limitations on work rights. There is a 'paradox of pace' at the heart of the timescale of immigration borders. While on the one hand, immigration systems are largely pervaded by a 'slowness' in terms of ever growing 'queues' and ever complexifying 'red tape', on the other hand, they simultaneously display a rapidity in policy change that can leave migrants 'stuck' or 'suspended' in time, or even instantaneously rendered illegal. However, meso timescales of governance and regulation do not always uniformly constrain migrants, rather privileging some at the expense of others. Processing times or pathways to permanence may be accelerated for elite skilled or business migrants seen to be most desirable under neoliberal immigration regimes, while unskilled labour remains 'temporarized' and precarious (Rajkumar et al., 2012; Yeoh and Lin, 2013). Overall, the meso timescale of governance is also greatly influenced by macro global and national timescales: election cycles; economic cycles of recession and recovery or labour supply and demand; periods of hyper-securitization like the 'war on terror' era; and demographic temporalities like ageing populations. The challenge for ethnography, then, is to find ways to understand how the more macro and meso timescales influence and intersect with the micro-politics of the everyday for migrants and communities. Significant here is the fact that migrants from the same ethnic or national group may be affected differently by timescales. Examples of this impact could include migrants who migrated before or after key policy changes or political events, or migrants with different kinds of temporal statuses. There can, for example, be disjunctures, distance and even animosity between those

considered to be 'long-term' or established and those perceived to be short-term (see, for example, Huang and Yeoh, 2005; Singh and Cabraal, 2010; Han and Han, 2010; Yeoh and Lin, 2013), which has a bearing not only on individual experience, but also on the constructions and performance of community.

Practising ethnography under a temporal frame

What, then, do these emerging temporalities mean for the practice of ethnographic research? Firstly, how can staggered and non-linear time tracks of migration be adequately captured, when ethnographic methods of interviewing and observation usually occur at fixed points in time or over fixed durations? And, secondly, how can the intersection of time tracks and timescales be analysed in ethnographic research? In the following sections, I look at how a more explicit awareness of temporalities, particularly time tracks and timescales, can be brought into traditional ethnographic techniques, such as interviewing and observations. I then look at alternative methods, in particular engagement with visual and textual self-documentation, including virtual or digital forms, and how they can work within ethnographic studies to foreground the complex temporalities of migrant experiences.

Capturing time tracks and timescales through traditional ethnographic methods

Traditional ethnographic approaches of in-depth interviews and observations have great potential to uncover how time functions in migrants' daily lives. However, when and how migrants are interviewed or observed becomes crucial in a temporally engaged approach. Rather than a single interview or a single period of observation, revisiting participants at significant moments or events in their migration time track – arrival, departure, re-entry, obtaining a visa, or significant symbolic milestones – may be appropriate. Alternatively, different groups who are at different 'points' on a similar time track could be comparatively interviewed or observed. For example, an ethnography of circular migration might seek to capture how the expectations and future imaginaries of migrants differ between those who are setting out on their first 'cycle' and those who have already experienced several reiterations of migration and return. Observation can also take place at sites connected to significant moments and events (for example, arrival, departure, return, deciding and preparing, ceremonies of belonging and transition), particularly the moments that often remain hidden in traditional ethnographies. The sites chosen for observation must also take into account the 'temporal diversity' of migrant communities by exploring whether there might be temporally fluid groups that interact in different spaces than those of established or long-term communities.

How interviews are conducted may also need to be re-thought under a temporal framework that makes time tracks and timescales central to analysis. In particular, the temporal linearity of the structure of the traditional interview, particularly when narratives of migration 'begin' and 'end', may need to be reframed. A temporally engaged approach needs to acknowledge the 'blurriness' of beginnings and endings; gather data that speak to the openness and contingencies of migrant futures; and acknowledge that plans may encompass conflicting 'ideal futures', 'possible futures' and 'likely futures'. The creation of 'cognitive maps' or 'participatory mapping' through sketches, GIS technology and cartography has been used to enhance ethnographic methodologies in a number of studies exploring culture, identity and space (Brennan-Horley, Luckman, Gibson, and Willoughby-Smith, 2010; Herlihy and Knapp, 2003; Matthews, Detwiler and Burton, 2005). I suggest that ethnographers and participants

could similarly construct 'cognitive timelines' as a means visually to create a sense of the time track, including its diversions, cycles and interruptions. A number of existing digital mapping and timeline technologies could be adapted to this purpose.

Following on from the calls of Mountz (2010) for ethnography to move 'inside' the state, I also argue that ethnographers who take time seriously need to turn attention to the institutions of the governance of migration (including governments, recruiters, brokers, agents, smugglers, employers, and so on); the practices of actors within these institutions; and the interactions of migrants with them. Institutional timelines, temporal constraints and temporal discourses frame and intersect with the lived experience of migration in complex ways. How migrant practices and subjectivities internalize, resist or negotiate these framings of timescales becomes key to empirical understandings. This is particularly significant to ethnographies that make time central, in that the embeddedness of migrant time tracks within meso and macro timescales can be illuminated at multiple levels through ethnographies of the state. In a similar way, ethnographies can engage with other non-state 'middle men' across the immigration system, such as brokers and recruiters, to illuminate more thoroughly the complex scales of temporal ordering in contemporary international migration. In particular, I would argue that 'moments' of interaction between the state or the facilitators of migration and the migrant are under-researched in current migration ethnographies. Immigration interviews, citizenship tests, interactions with border control officers, acts of migrant labour recruitment that could occur in offices, online or on street corners, interactions with smugglers and brokers in the decision making process, interactions with the settlement system, and so on, are all significant events on a migration time track that are embedded within and constitutive of various timescales. The ethnographic observation of these processes may shed particular light on the temporalities of migration, particularly how these diverse interactions at different 'points' in the time track shape or constrain migrant practices and subjectivities.

Engaging with the textual, the visual and the virtual through ethnographic self-documentation

Ethnographers have recently been called on to work beyond oral data and to explore participant self-documentation through existing texts and the production of new texts, often taking the form of diaries and journals (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Visual methods have also foregrounded the value of participant- or collaboratively-produced video and photography to ethnographic research (Banks, 2001; Emmison and Smith, 2000; Pink, 2001, 2004). Here, I look at how existing textual and visual artifacts, as well as textual and visual materials produced through research itself, can be productive for migration ethnographies that engage with temporality. First, there is a mass of data that migrants already collect and produce over the course of their migration journeys that may be highly relevant to ethnographers. For example, the 'paper trail' created by migrants' interactions with migration regimes and systems could be useful data points for bringing in timescales of governance: visa and work permit applications, residency documents, employment contracts, job applications, and so on reveal the intricacies of the entanglement of lives with regulation and provide documentary evidence of key moments and processes. Second, there are also the personal records of migrants' themselves – diaries, journals, photo albums, calendars, letters, emails and text messages, blog and social media posts – that could tell the temporal story of migration time tracks. Home produced visual documentation, such as videos and photo albums, have previously been utilized as ethnographic data (see, for example, Kotkin, 1978; Koltyk, 1993). In more contemporary contexts, the rise of web cameras, smart phone

technology, online communities and social media is likely to have greatly increased the amount of visual and digital self-documentation that migrants produce, archive and share through 'technologies of the self' (Schwarz, 2009; Fitzgerald, 2000). Social media and blog formats may be of particular value to temporally engaged research as they often exist as linear constructions of personal experience, posted in 'real-time' and chronologically archived and displayed. They can, therefore, expose both daily practices and rhythms and key moments and milestones across a migration time track. Online communication between migrants in different places or between migrants and their friends and families can also transcend the temporal 'lags' between here and there, synchronizing different places through what Cwerner (2001) refers to as "asynchronous times". Thus, both the content of these media and their temporal form can be useful to understanding how migration shapes and is shaped by constructions of time. They simultaneously create historic trails of the past; synchronize different time zones in the present; and express imaginaries of the future.

There is also the possibility of producing materials throughout the research process, either individually or collaboratively, using specific prompts or materials provided by the researcher. These can include traditional modes of self-documentation such as journals, as well as mixed and multi-media approaches, like web or video logging, or mixed media 'cultural probes' (Robertson, 2008). Participant self-documentation can serve a number of important purposes in research into migration temporalities. They can allow participants to record responses to events immediately, without the element of retrospective reflection inherent to interviews; they can record a volume of detailed and complex data over time that an interview or observation setting could not capture; and they can give the researcher glimpses into the private worlds of the participants, including their timelines, tempos and rhythms, without having physically to intrude into these environments. They can thus capture migrants in many different physical spaces, as well as when they are 'on the move'.

Conclusions

This paper has engaged with some key conceptual and methodological issues around ethnographic research and the temporalities of international migration, seeking to suggest some ways in which ethnographic methods can 'break in' to the temporal dimension. I have outlined some of the complex temporal characteristics of contemporary migration, and positioned them within broader theories of migration and time, as well as within debates on the methodological challenges to contemporary international migration research. I have suggested the framework of time track and timescale as a means to get a grip on some of the complex relationships between time and migration in the contemporary world and, through this framework, discussed two key areas of methodological concern to research on temporality and migration: the role of time in defining research subjects and the issue of thoroughly capturing meso and macro timescales and their intersections with individual lives. Following Mills' (2000) suggestion that a blending of methods may be the best way to capture temporality, I have also suggested some ways to move away from methodological statism and fixedness in terms of research practice. These include restructuring traditional ethnographic techniques such as interviewing and participant observation, and engaging with self-documentation data in various textual, visual and digital forms.

In particular, structuring ethnographic methods with a conceptual focus on time track and timescale, which works in concert with ideas of spatiality, serves to resituate the border, which is ultimately the construct that most definitively defines and shapes international

migration. This resituating involves not just looking at the physical crossing of the border, but the temporal borders, both paper and imagined, that migrants must cross before or after they physically depart or arrive, and the extensions, suspensions, accelerations and decelerations of time that occur at and between these borders. Thinking of these moments of crossing temporally, as milestones or moments in a non-linear timeline, allows their significance to be illuminated in space.

It is clear that ethnography is well placed to find new ways to engage with and analyse increasing spatio-temporal complexity in international migration, the "'quantum haze' of human mobility" (McHugh, 2000: 72). Ethnography, with its focus on depth and meaning making, can shed light on the stickiness and fuzziness around temporariness, permanence, transience, precarity, flexibility, and alienation across migrant practices and migrant subjectivities. Yet it is also abundantly clear that, as with any method, ethnography has limits. Meeus (2012) and Hage (2005) have pointed out that research methods will always have spatial limits, and that there will always be potential conflicts between the mobility of the researched and the mobility of the researcher. Likewise, there will always be potential temporal conflicts between the 'times of the researcher' and the 'times of migrants'. In some ways ethnographers can only ever hope to capture "snapshots and slices" of complex migration systems (McHugh, 2000: 72). Yet, bringing a temporal dimension into how we define, choose and approach these "snapshots and slices" can mean more nuanced understandings, both of migrant experiences and of the overall nature of migration as a complex bundle of interlocking political and social processes. Ethnographic approaches that take seriously the idea of time tracks and timescales as temporalities constitutive of these processes have the potential to bring new methodological and conceptual innovations to the field.

References

Allon, F., Anderson, K. and Bushell, R. 2008, 'Mutant Mobilities: Backpacker Tourism in "Global" Sydney', *Mobilities*, 3(1): 73–94.

Amelina, A. and Faist, T. 2012, 'De-Naturalizing the National in Research Methodologies: Key Concepts of Transnational Studies in Migration', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35(10): 1707–24.

Aneesh, A. 2001, 'Rethinking Migration: On-Line Labour Flows from India to the United States', in, W. A. Cornelius, T. J. Espenshade and I. Salehyan (eds), *The International Migration of the Highly Skilled*, La Jolla: Centre for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego, pp 351–70.

Bailey, A. J. 2009, 'Population Geography: Lifecourse Matters', *Progress in Human Geography*, 33(3): 407–18.

Banks, M. 2001, *Visual Methods in Social Research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Barber, P. G. 2000, 'Agency in Philippine Women's Labour Migration and Provisional Diaspora', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23(4): 399–411.

Basch, L., Glick Schiller, N. and Szanton Blanc, C. 1994, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association.

Beck, U. 1992, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London: Sage.

Brennan-Horley, C., Luckman, S., Gibson, C. and Willoughby-Smith, J. 2010, 'GIS, Ethnography, and Cultural Research: Putting Maps Back into Ethnographic Mapping', *Information Society*, 26(2): 92–103.

Carling, J. R. 2002, 'Migration in the Age of Involuntary Immobility: Theoretical Reflections and Cape Verdean Experiences', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28(1): 5–42.

Carlstein, T., Parkes, D. and Thrift N. 1978, *Making Sense of Time*, volume one of *Timing Space and Spacing Time*, London: Wiley.

Castles, S. 2002, 'Migration and Community Formation under Conditions of Globalization', *International Migration Review*, 36(4): 1143–68.

Castles, S., Booth, H. and Wallace, T. 1984. *Here for Good: Western Europe's New Ethnic Minorities*, London: Pluto Press.

Collins, F. L. 2012, 'Transnational Mobilities and Urban Spatialities: Notes from the Asia-Pacific', *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(3): 316–35.

Cwerner, S. B. 2001, 'The Times of Migration', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27(1): 7–36.

——— 2004, 'Faster, Faster and Faster: The Time Politics of Asylum in the UK', *Time and Society*, 13(1): 71–88.Dauvergne, C. and Marsden, S. 2011, 'The Ideology of Temporary

Labour Migration in the Post-Global Era', Social Science Research Network. Accessed on 18 December 2013 from: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1768342.

Durkheim, E. [1895] 1964, *Rules of the Sociological Method*, New York: Free Press of Glencoe.

——— [1912] 1915, *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, London: Allen and Unwin.

Elsrud, T. 1998, 'Time Creation in Travelling: The Taking and Making of Time among Women Backpackers', *Time and Society*, 7(2–3): 309–34.

Emmison, M. and Smith, P. 2000, *Researching the Visual: Images, Objects, Contexts and Interactions in Social and Cultural Enquiry*, London: Sage.

Favell, A. 2005, 'Integration Nations: The Nation-State and Research on Immigrants in Western Europe', in, M. Bommes and E. Morawska (eds), *International Migration Research: Constructions, Omissions and the Promises of Interdisciplinarity*, Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, pp 41–68.

Findlay, A. M. and Li, F. L. N. 1999, 'Methodological Issues in Researching Migration', *Professional Geographer*, 51(1): 50–59.

Fischer, P. A., Martin, R. and Straubhaar, T. 1997, 'Should I Stay or Should I Go?', in, T. Hammar (ed.), *International Migration, Immobility and Development*, Oxford, UK: Berg, pp 49–90.

Fitzgerald, D. 2000, *Negotiating Extra-Territorial Citizenship: Mexican Migration and the Transnational Politics of Community*, La Jolla: Center for Comparative Immigration Studies, University of California, San Diego.

——— 2006, 'Towards a Theoretical Ethnography of Migration', *Qualitative Sociology*, 29(1): 1–24.

Gamlen, A. 2008, 'The Emigration State and the Modern Geopolitical Imagination', *Political Geography*, 27(8): 840–56.

Giddens, A. 1991, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. [1971] 2010, *Status Passage*, New Brunswick, NJ: AldineTransaction.

Golden, D. 2002, 'Belonging through Time: Nurturing National Identity among Newcomers to Israel from the Former Soviet Union', *Time and Society*, 11(1): 5–24.

Goldring, L. and Landolt, P. 2011, 'Caught in the Work–Citizenship Matrix: The Lasting Effects of Precarious Legal Status on Work for Toronto Immigrants', *Globalizations*, 8(3): 325–41.

Griffiths, M., Rogers, A. and Anderson, B. 2013, 'Migration, Time and Temporalities: Review and Prospect', *COMPAS Research Resources Papers*, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, Oxford. Accessed on 18 December 2013 from: http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/fileadmin/files/Publications/Research_Resources/Citizenship/Report_-_Migration_Time_and_Temporalities_FINAL.pdf.

Hage, G. 2005, 'A Not So Multi-Sited Ethnography of a Not So Imagined Community', *Anthropological Theory*, 5(4): 463–75.

Hammersley, M. and Atkinson, P. 2007, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 3rd ed., London: Routledge.

Han, J.-J. and Han, G.-S. 2010, 'The Koreans in Sydney', *Sydney Journal*, 2(2): 25–35.

Harvey, D. 1999, 'Time-Space Compression and the Postmodern Condition', in, M. Waters (ed.), *After Modernity*, volume four of *Modernity: Critical Concepts*, London: Routledge, pp 98–118.

Heinz, W. R. and Krüger, H. 2001, 'Life Course: Innovations and Challenges for Social Research', *Current Sociology*, 49(2): 29–45.

Herlihy, P. H. and Knapp, G. 2003, 'Maps of, by, and for the Peoples of Latin America', *Human Organization*, 62(4): 303–14.

Huang, S. and Yeoh, B. S. A. 2005, 'Transnational Families and Their Children's Education: China's "Study Mothers" in Singapore', *Global Networks*, 5(4): 379–400.

King, R., Thomson, M., Fielding, T. and Warnes, T. 2006, 'Time, Generations and Gender in Migration and Settlement', in, R. Penninx, M. Berger and K. Kraal (eds), *The Dynamics of International Migration and Settlement in Europe*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Kobayashi, A. and Preston, V. 2007, 'Transnationalism through The Life Course: Hong Kong Immigrants in Canada', *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, 48(2): 151–67.

Koltyk, J. A. 1993, 'Telling Narratives through Home Videos: Hmong Refugees and Self-Documentation of Life in the Old and New Country', *Journal of American Folklore*, 106(422): 435–49.

Kotkin, A. 1978, 'The Family Photo Album as a Form of Folklore', *Exposure*, 16(1): p. 4–8.

Lewis, G. and Neal, S. 2005, 'Introduction: Contemporary Political Contexts, Changing Terrains and Revisited Discourses', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 28(3): 423–44.

Lyman, S. M. and Scott, M. B. 1989, *A Sociology of the Absurd*, 2nd ed., Dix Hills, NY: General Hall.

Marcus, G. E. 1995, 'Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 25(95): 95–117.

Matthews, S. A., Detwiler, J. E. and Burton, L. M. 2005, 'Geo-Ethnography: Coupling Geographic Information Analysis Techniques with Ethnographic Methods in Urban

Research', *Cartographica: The International Journal for Geographic Information and Geovisualization*, 40(4): 75–90.

May, J. and Thrift, N. 2001, 'Introduction', in, J. May and N. Thrift (eds), *TimeSpace: Geographies of Temporality*, London: Routledge, pp 1–46.McHugh, K. E. 2000, 'Inside, Outside, Upside Down, Backward, Forward, Round and Round: A Case for Ethnographic Studies in Migration', *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(1): 71–89.

Mead, G. H. 1932, *The Philosophy of the Present*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Meeus, B. 2012, 'How to 'Catch' Floating Populations? Research and the Fixing of Migration in Space and Time', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 35(10): 1775–93.

Mills, M. 2000, 'Providing Space for Time: The Impact of Temporality on Life Course Research', *Time and Society*, 9(1): 91–127.

Mountz, A. 2010, *Seeking Asylum: Human Smuggling and Bureaucracy at the Border*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Mountz, A., Wright, R., Miyares, I. and Bailey, A. J. 2002, 'Lives in Limbo: Temporary Protected Status and Immigrant Identities', *Global Networks*, 2(4): 335–56.

Munn, N. D. 1992, 'The Cultural Anthropology of Time: A Critical Essay', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21: 93–123.

Neilson, B. 2009, 'The World Seen from a Taxi: Students-Migrants-Workers in the Global Multiplication of Labour', *Subjectivity*, 29(1): 425–44.

Ong, A. 2006, 'Mutations in Citizenship', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 23(2–3): 499–505.

Parreñas, R. S. 2010, 'Homeward Bound: The Circular Migration of Entertainers between Japan and the Philippines', *Global Networks*, 10(3): 301–23.

Pink, S. 2001, *Doing Visual Ethnography: Images, Media and Representation in Research*, London: Sage.

——— 2004, 'Visual Methods', in, C. Seale, G. Gobo, J. F. Gubrium and D. Silverman (eds), *Qualitative Research Practice*, London: Sage, pp 392–406.

Rajkumar, D., Berkowitz, L., Vosko, L. F., Preston, V. and Latham, R. 2012, 'At the Temporary-Permanent Divide: How Canada Produces Temporariness and Makes Citizens through its Security, Work, and Settlement Policies', *Citizenship Studies*, 16(3–4): 483–510.

Robertson, S. 2008, 'Cultural Probes in Transmigrant Research: A Case Study', *InterActions: UCLA Journal of Education and Information Studies*, 4(2): n.p.

——— 2011, 'Cash Cows, Backdoor Migrants, or Activist Citizens? International Students, Citizenship, and Rights in Australia', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 34(12): 2192–211.

——— 2013, *Transnational Student-Migrants and the State: The Education-Migration Nexus*, Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Robertson, S. and Runganaikaloo, A., forthcoming, 'Lives in Limbo: Migration Experiences in Australia's Education-Migration Nexus', *Ethnicities*.

Rodriguez, R. M. 2002, 'Migrant Heroes: Nationalism, Citizenship and the Politics of Filipino Migrant Labor', *Citizenship Studies*, 6(3): 341–56.

Schwarz, O. 2009, 'Good Young Nostalgia: Camera Phones and Technologies of Self among Israeli Youths', *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 9(3): 348–76.

Singh, S. and Cabraal, A. 2010, 'Indian Student Migrants in Australia: Issues of Community Sustainability', *People and Place*, 18(1): 19–30.

Smith, M. P. 2001, *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization*, Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Urry, J. 2000, *Sociology beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, London: Routledge.

Wimmer, A. and Glick Schiller, N. 2002, 'Methodological Nationalism and Beyond: Nation-State Building, Migration and the Social Sciences', *Global Networks*, 2(4): 301–34.

——— 2003, 'Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology', *International Migration Review*, 37(3): 576–610.

Worby, E. 2010, 'Address Unknown: The Temporality of Displacement and the Ethics of Disconnection among Zimbabwean Migrants in Johannesburg', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 36(2): 417–31.

Yeoh, B. S. A.and Lin, W. 2013, 'Chinese Migration to Singapore: Discourses and Discontents in a Globalizing Nation-State', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 22(1): 31–54.